

## **COMMUNICATION IS KEY!!**

**Healing Community Conflict with Mediation and Facilitation Skills**

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### **CORE PRINCIPLES of Consensus Building, Group Facilitation and Mediation:**

- **Safety first**  
The organizers and facilitators of a group process have a responsibility to the participants to hold as safe a space as possible for dialogue. This will create the optimal container for people to share sometimes challenging points of view, hear each other and be open to new understanding, new or renewed relationships and new agreements moving forward. If people feel unsafe, the listening necessary to transform conflict becomes impossible.
- **Everyone has a piece of the truth**  
Participants have both a right and a responsibility to share their pieces of the truth. Everyone has a contribution to make, and we have a fuller picture of reality when we put our pieces together.
- **Neutrality**  
For those leading group process, neutrality is critical, both to be effective and to inspire confidence. It is common for those new to consensus building not to go far enough to preserve both their neutrality and the appearance of neutrality. Depending on the level of trust or conflict, it can be helpful to bring in an outside neutral facilitator to inspire greater trust in the process.
- **Be the change you want to see happen**  
The facilitators' approach to the process sets the tone for all of the group work that follows. A combination of sincerity, respect, patience, compassion, curiosity and optimism opens the possibility of breakthroughs to new understanding, agreement and strengthened relationships in community. Model the behavior you want from group participants. Meet emotion with kindness and a desire to understand what lies behind it.
- **Tradeoff between inclusion and efficiency**  
In general, there is a tradeoff in group process between inclusion and efficiency. Decide where to strike the balance based on strength of opinion, diversity of opinion, and the stakes or scale of the decisions that may be made. If in doubt, it is better to err on the side of inclusion, even if this means a longer process.
- **Proactivity**  
For important decisions, whenever you can anticipate difficulties, you will save the community time, energy, money and headaches if you gather a diverse group

of stakeholders and build agreement up front—rather than waiting until problems arise and having to do mend situations and relationships later.

Advance preparation is crucial to success:

- Case development  
Where conflict has arisen, it works best for neutral mediator(s) to contact all parties, talk to them ahead of time and hear their concerns.
- Neuroscience behind case development  
Allowing people to vent one-on-one with mediators ahead of time diminishes the “fight or flight” response and allows participants to come to dialogue more ready for their higher level reasoning processes to function.
- Get the right people to the table
- Remember that, of the facilitators’ total time spent working on a dialogue process, 70-90% may be spent before and in between meetings, in preparation and follow-up.

- **Foundation Principle**

Remember that each discussion or decision builds the foundation for the next.

- In a straightforward, proactive process without conflict, such as planning, it often works best to proceed from general principles to specific decisions
- In a conflict resolution or debriefing process, proceeding from specifics to deducing general principles may shed more light
- Proceed from agreement to areas not yet in agreement
- In planning agendas, create a logical flow of issues  
Planning your agenda using the Foundation Principle builds common understanding long before decision-making time arrives.
- Take the time to build understanding and agreement up front:  
“go slow to go fast”
- If you can’t build agreement, at least build understanding.

Using the Foundation Principle allows you to:

- Proceed incrementally so that if, at any point, you run into conflict or don’t reach agreement, you still have understanding and hopefully some agreement on previous steps.
- Refer to previous steps and decisions in order to be certain that all decisions are in alignment with foundational decisions.

- **Positions and interests**

(from Roger Fisher and William L. Ury, *Getting to Yes*, 1981)

It is important to differentiate between positions and interests.

- Positions = *what* someone says they want
- Interests = *why* they want that—underlying needs, values, priorities

## **STEPS OF A MEDIATION PROCESS:**

(courtesy of Center for Dialogue and Resolution, Eugene, Oregon)

- **Information sharing**  
Begin by sharing stories, one at a time, about what happened from each person's point of view and how they were impacted by events.
- **Identifying issues and interests**  
Help participants to name the main issues to be discussed and all the interests in the system.
- **Generating and evaluating options**  
Brainstorm possible solutions that could meet most or all of the interests identified. Evaluate and choose the best options.
- **Reaching resolution**  
Finalize the agreement(s) by fine tuning the wording, usually in writing.

## **SKILLS:**

- **Agenda design: applying the Foundation Principle**  
See sample agendas.
- **Active listening:**  
“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.” — Epictetus, Roman philosopher
  - Validate—acknowledge all points of view with respect
  - Empathize—articulate how people were affected, name emotions without judging, help participants to see others' points of view
  - Clarify—using open-ended questions
  - Summarize
- **Reflecting back to the speaker:**
  - Individual paraphrasing
  - Summarizing—both individuals and emerging threads of dialogue
- **Reframing**  
Reframe toxic statements into neutral language, keeping the content while taking out the “sting.” For example, reframe judgments about others as a statement about what is important to the speaker.
- **Encourage participants** to use these skills as well  
Often in difficult conversations, verbal expressions of understanding enable individuals to relax and let go of some of their anger and acrimony. This is

equally true for the speakers who are stretching outside their own points of view to verbalize understanding of others' experiences and values, and also for the listeners hearing others reflect back what they have said.

**When to bring in outside help:**

- The level of trust is low and/or conflict is high
- Those who would normally facilitate are perceived, or are concerned about being perceived, as not being neutral
- Those who would normally facilitate don't have the skill level required
- The process would benefit from having those who would normally facilitate be participants instead
- The situation expands into a complex, multi-stakeholder situation.

**RESOURCES:**

- Alpha Institute, [www.alphainstitute.org](http://www.alphainstitute.org), 541-510-1540
- National Association for Community Mediation (NAFCM), [www.nafcm.org/](http://www.nafcm.org/)
- International Association of Facilitators (IAF), [www.iaf-world.org](http://www.iaf-world.org)
- In Lane County, Oregon: Center for Dialogue and Resolution (CDR), [www.communitymediationservices.com/](http://www.communitymediationservices.com/)



Lysbeth Borie's facilitation and teaching grows from more than 30 years of experience, with a strong emphasis on consensus decision making. She has worked with a variety of nonprofit and government organizations, businesses, schools and community groups in the Pacific Northwest and nationwide. One of her strengths is her versatility and skill with both complex information and charged emotional situations as well as straightforward planning. Using a wide variety of methods, Lysbeth has facilitated meetings of all kinds, from brainstorm and goal-setting sessions, business meetings and conventions to in-depth conflict resolution sessions and retreats. She also trains groups in effective decision making, consensus building, and group facilitation.

**Neighborhood Meeting #1**  
**(Board and City staff)**  
**September 6, 2012, 4-7 p.m.**  
**Proposed agenda**

<b>Time/agenda item</b>			<b>Purpose</b>
4:05	15	Welcome, purpose, introductions Facilitator's box: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• brevity, raise hands, refer to what someone else has said rather than repeating. Invite guidelines/sensibilities.</li> <li>• Paraphrasing/summarizing</li> </ul>	Set guidelines, tone  Alert participants that you will be asking them to practice skills
4:20	10	<i>How long have you lived in the neighborhood/in Eugene?</i> <i>What do you love or appreciate about this neighborhood?</i>	Set positive tone, context  Circle and dot
4:30	30-45	One minute each: <i>Summarize <u>briefly</u> what happened from your point of view. OK to pass.</i>	Information sharing
5:00	30-45	<i>Please share how you were affected by the way things unfolded.</i> (use paraphrasing here)	Information sharing/ Identify issues and interests  Encourage building empathy Build skills
5:30	15	Dinner break	Rhythm! Encourage lower tension
5:45	30	<i>What would it take to mend relationships in the neighborhood and between the neighborhood and the city?</i>	Invite awareness of shared interests, criteria, forward looking
(6:15	30	<i>What would a better process look like?)</i>	Generate options
6:45	15	Next steps: Who should meet together next time? Meeting time	Identify next steps
7:00		adjourn	

**Neighborhood Meeting #2**  
**(Board and neighbors)**  
**January 14, 2013, 7-9 p.m.**  
**Proposed agenda**

<b>Time/agenda item</b>			<b>Purpose</b>
7:00	10	Welcome/introductions/ Purpose/background Expectations about time	Set expectations, tone
7:10	5	Agenda review	Set expectations
7:15	10	Vision: <i>What is your vision for an ideal neighborhood association?</i>	Set positive tone, context  Circle and dot
7:25	15	Neighborhood association board: <i>What would you like your members to understand about how you approach communicating with the neighborhood and how you make decisions?</i>	Information sharing/ Identify interests
7:40	20	Neighbors: <i>What are your expectations for how the board gets input, makes decisions and communicates with you?</i>	Information sharing/ Identify interests
8:00	20	Everyone: <i>How can we (board and neighbors) best work with divergent views on issues facing the neighborhood?</i>	Invite shared interests, criteria, proactive approach to current and future conflict
8:20	25	Representing the neighborhood's interests: <i>What principles or guidelines could help guide neighbors and the board in how best to engage with one other?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review neighborhood association charter</li> <li>• Review Neighborhood Organization Recognition Policy (NORP)</li> </ul>	Identify criteria for future decisions and actions  Generate options
8:45	15	Next steps: <i>What are our immediate next steps to act on these principles?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the board</li> <li>• For individuals</li> <li>• For other stakeholders</li> </ul>	Generate options  Reach resolution  Affirm progress
9:00		Adjourn	

# AN OVERVIEW OF FRAMING AND REFRAMING

## Framing:

Framing refers to the way in which an issue, problem, attitude or belief is communicated. Parties in conflict often frame the issue(s) from very narrow perspectives. Frames reflect the positions that the parties hold regarding their desired outcome for the conflict. Positions are often stated in language that is exclusionary and one-sided, and that don't meet the needs of the other person. Further exacerbating conflict, positions are also frequently framed as threats or demands.

### Example:

*"I can't stand your constant, nit-picky, last minute changes to my meeting agenda. It really gets my goat. I give you the draft agenda 2 days ahead of time, yet I don't get any feedback until 5 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start. I've had it! From now on, the agenda I send out is the one we're sticking with. Since you can't be bothered to get revisions to me in a timely manner, you've just lost your chance to give any input at all."*

## Reframing:

Reframing is a mediator intervention that restates the way an issue is communicated. When a mediator reframes a parties' highly positional, toxic, perhaps value laden language, they seek to retain the essence of the underlying interests contained in the message, while making it easier for the parties to hear and effectively engage in problem-solving. The skill of reframing is an invaluable tool for mediators to use in preparing the parties for interest-based negotiation.

In reframing, the mediator drops the toxic language, reflects back the underlying interests (substantive, procedural, psychological), and provides a future focus for problem-solving. All reframing interventions are interactive and iterative.

### Example:

*"It's frustrating for you when you offer your staff opportunities to give feedback about the agenda well in advance of the meeting and this isn't taken advantage of. It's important to plan for an effective meeting, and last minute changes make this difficult for you. It sounds as though you would welcome feedback from your staff if it's provided with enough advance notice for you to thoughtfully act on. Is that accurate? So, looking forward, if we discuss possible ways for you to plan efficient, effective meetings that incorporate staff recommendations would you be interested in doing that?"*

# REFRAMING CHECKLIST

## A Tool for Moving From Positional Bargaining to Mutual Problem-Solving

- ✧ Reframe issues in neutral language; take the charge out of statements, but keep the issue.
- ✧ Verbalize and make explicit the interests in an issue to be solved.
- ✧ When suggestions for resolution are proposed early in the negotiations, reframe them in terms of the interest they are designed to meet.
- ✧ Separate substantive, procedural, and psychological or relationship issues contained in a position; frame them as separate issues or interests to be met.
- ✧ Reframe the problem in terms of a search for the means to satisfy identified interests, rather than in terms of persuading the other party to agree to a particular position.
- ✧ Reframe the issues to emphasize the commonality of interests or the possibility of mutual gain.
- ✧ Reframe issues:

From		To
Positions/demands/rights	⇒	Interests
Time	⇒	Options
Control	⇒	Shared/divided areas of responsibility
Right/wrong	⇒	Acceptable differences
Justice/fairness	⇒	Good enough/balanced
Past wrongs	⇒	Future behavior

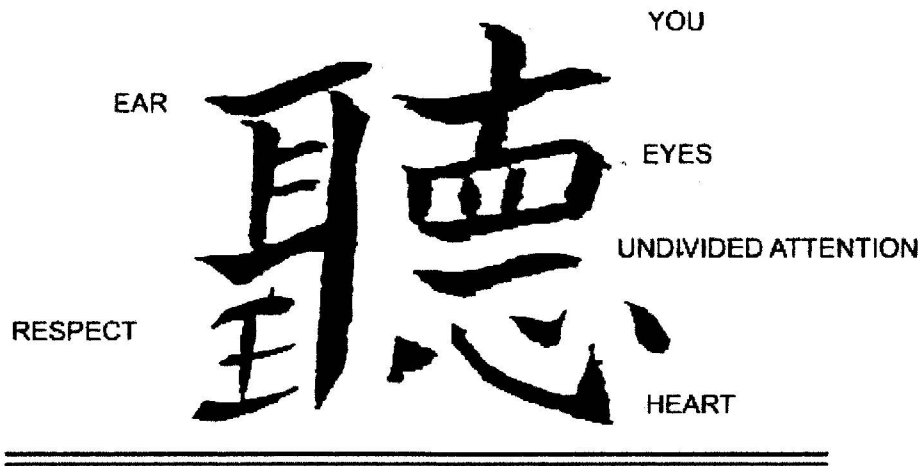




## DEEP COMPASSIONATE LISTENING

"Mini-Paraphrasing" (3 criteria)

The Chinese characters which make up the verb "to listen"  
tell us something significant about this skill.



*from*  
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## PARAPHRASING

**PURPOSE:** *to convey understanding & caring support to the person speaking*

**DEFINITION:** restating in your own words (using synonyms) what you understand the person speaking has said SO FAR

**PROCESS:** using your own words, STATE the gist, or heart, of the content  
.....of what you understood SO FAR ...

1. **FOCUS ON THE SPEAKER** (it is helpful to start out with "You ...")
2. Restate the **FACTS AND/OR FEELINGS** you understood
3. Be as **BRIEF** and succinct as possible:  
(if the speaker shares a paragraph of 3 - 5 sentences,  
your paraphrase would be 3 - 12 words in length)



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